

# Some birds observed in the monsoon in Central Nepal<sup>1</sup>

M. W. AND B. J. WOODCOCK<sup>2</sup>  
(With a text-figure)

The following notes were made during a three week trek from Pokhara towards Annapurna at the height of the monsoon in July and August 1973. Our original objective was to get up to around 14,000 feet in the Annapurna "Sanctuary" area to find and study breeding Rosefinches (*Carpodacus* spp.), but this proved somewhat ambitious in view of the time available to us. Also, there was an unfortunate deterioration in the weather when we were within three or four hours of our objective, and we were forced to camp at Hinko cave, at around 10,400 feet in the valley of the Modi Khola, by cold driving rain and high winds, and we could not spare the few days necessary to allow the weather to moderate and still give us time for our return walk.

Despite the conditions, every opportunity was taken to study and identify the birds that came under our notice, and we hope that in recording this list, some comparison may be made with the species encountered at other times of the year when it is easier to operate, and in consequence for periods covered by most other accounts. One or two of the comments concern birds observed in the Gokarna Forest Reserve near Kathmandu.

We would like to record our gratitude to

Richard Odell and John Flatt of the Lumle Agricultural Research station for much kindness and assistance, and to Dr. Robert Fleming of Kathmandu for his comments on the list.

*Pernis ptilorhynchus*—Crested Honey Buzzard

A single bird circled round overhead several times in the Gokarna Reserve, on 8th August. It was flying at tree-top height, and therefore easily identifiable, being in fairly typical plumage, with well barred wings, and two bars close to the base of the tail. Proud (*JBNHS* 53:71) records a Honey Buzzard sp. as common in the valley between November and March, and Biswas (*JBNHS* 57:283) records two females from Hitaura in the *Dun* in July.

*Milvus migrans govinda*—Pariah Kite

Common at Kathmandu and Pokhara. One at Ghandrung at 2350 m.

*Milvus migrans lineatus*—Large Indian Kite

Three birds together on hillside above Pokhara at 1130 m.

*Accipiter nisus*—Sparrow-Hawk

A large immature Sparrow-hawk above Chhumrung at 2350 m was thought to be of this species. It was seen well as it perched on a branch, and the tarsus looked long and thin enough to rule out the Shikra (*A. badius*).

*Spizaetus nipalensis*—Hodgson's Hawk-Eagle

Two birds of either this species or *S. cirrhatus*, the Changeable Hawk-Eagle, were seen soaring over forest in the Modi Khola valley

<sup>1</sup> Accepted January 1975.

<sup>2</sup> The fives, Elderden Farm, Staplehurst, Tonbridge, Kent, England.

SOME BIRDS OBSERVED IN CENTRAL NEPAL

near Chhumrung at about 2400 m. They were dark brown above, rather bleached in places, and showed dark, even barring on the tail.

*Ictinaetus malayensis*—Black Eagle

At least four individuals were seen around Lumle 25-26 July.

*Torgos calvus*—King Vulture

A single bird seen in the hills above Pokhara.

*Aegypius monachus*—Black Vulture

One individual flew close overhead in open hill country between Lumle and Pokhara on 6 August. This is apparently a very early record for this uncommon winter visitor (Fleming—in litt.).

*Gyps himalayensis*—Himalayan Griffon

One near Pokhara. The huge size and pale coloration are distinctive.

*Gyps bengalensis*—Whitebacked Vulture

Pokhara and Lumle, seen at up to 2400 m.

*Neophron percnopterus*—Scavenger Vulture

Pokhara and Lumle, up to 1850 m.

*Gypaetus barbatus*—Lammergeier

Seen several times at Lumle at 1900 m, 25th and 26th July, and two together on 5th August. Ghandrung, one on 3rd August.

*Spilornis cheela*—Serpent Eagle

Seen commonly from the hills above Pokhara up to Chhumrung at 2900 m.

*Falco peregrinus*—Shahin Falcon

Two pairs and a single bird in a range of open, rocky hillside north-west of Pokhara at 1350 m. One pair were indulging in the impressive display flight; as one bird circled around high in the air, a second rose to join it, and then both swooped down the hillside in a great rush, actually rolling over in mid flight and showing the rusty coloured underparts.

*Falco tinnunculus*—Kestrel

Seen near Pokhara 23 July, and at Chandrakot 4 August.

*Ardeola grayii*—Pond Heron.

Kathmandu.

*Bubulcus ibis*—Cattle Egret

Kathmandu.

*Egretta grazetta*—Little Egret

Kathmandu and Pokhara.

*Lophura leucomelana*—Kaleej

Six females supposed to be of this species flew over a path in the Gokarna reserve from one hillside to another.

*Treron sphenura*—Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon

A male and two females together in a tree at Khuldi at 3000 m on 2 August.

*Streptopelia tranquebarica*—Red Turtle Dove

Gokarna Reserve, Kathmandu.

*Streptopelia chinensis*—Spotted-necked Dove

Common around Kathmandu and Pokhara.

*Coracias benghalensis*—Indian Roller

Pokhara.

*Halcyon smyrnensis*—White-breasted Kingfisher

Gokarna Reserve, Kathmandu.

*Collocalia brevirostris*—Himalayan Swiftlet

Common over river valleys from around 1300 m near Pokhara up to 3800 m above Hinko cave, where there was a single bird flying around in driving rain. There is a paucity of records in the literature for this species, and although Scully in 1879 mentioned it as being common on the hills round the Nepal valley from 1830 m upwards, more recent observers have not elaborated much on the position in print. Smythies (*JBNHS* 47:442) found parties over the Gandak-Kosi watershed in September, and Proud (*JBNHS* 50:365) found it there in spring. This is some 140 km eastwards. Fleming (in litt.) says "we have found it quite common" but does not say where. It is a small

swift, the wings not being as sharply pointed as in *Apus*, and the tail showing a slight fork only when closed, but generally looking square or even rounded when the bird is banking. As remarked in the HANDBOOK the flight at intervals becomes suddenly very fluttery. Although the bird can look very dark against the sky, it is actually brownish-grey, the head, body and wing coverts being darker, and the rump and under tail coverts lightest, contrasting with the dark tail.

*Apus affinis*—House Swift

Common around Kathmandu and Pokhara.

*Hemiprocne longipennis*—Crested Tree Swift

One was watched hawking over a glade in the Gokarna Reserve on 22 July. Biswas (JBNHS 58:120) only lists three specimens, from the central bhabar and dun biotopes, and I cannot find a record of this species from the Nepal valley. There was no possibility of a mistake in the identification, and I am familiar with the species from northern Thailand.

*Megalaima virens*—Great Barbet

One was seen in surprisingly open countryside with scattered trees near a small village above Pokhara at about 1350 m.

*Megalaima franklinii*—Golden-throated Barbet

Seen and heard fairly commonly from Lumle at 2000 m to Chhumrung at 2500 m. Not in the Gokarna Reserve.

*Megalaima asiatica*—Blue-throated Barbet

Common in the Gokarna reserve, and in the hills north-west of Pokhara.

*Megalaima haemacephala*—Coppersmith

The unmistakable call of this bird was heard at Pokhara, 7 August.

*Picus canus*—Blacknaped Green Woodpecker

One watched for some time in the Gokarna Reserve.

*Dendrocopus darjellensis*—Pied Woodpecker

Seen near Khuldi at 2500 m.

*Dendrocopus auriceps*—Brown-fronted Pied Woodpecker

Several around Lumle and Chhumrung at up to 2350 m.

*Dendrocopus canicapillus*—Pygmy Woodpecker

Two in the Gokarna Reserve 22 July.

*Picumnus innominatus*—Speckled Piculet

Several seen in mixed flocks around the hills above Lumle at about 2000 m, 25th and 26th July.

*Hirundo rustica*—Swallow

Seen at Kathmandu on 22 July and 8th August, and at Pokhara 6th and 7th August.

*Hirundo daurica*—Redrumped Swallow

Common at Kathmandu and Pokhara, but not seen above 1800 m.

*Delichon nipalensis*—Himalayan House Martin

Seen commonly above river valleys and woods from about 2000 m near Lumle, but much scarcer above 2800 m. Fleming & Taylor (1968:168) seem to have been first to record this species from central Nepal, and on the previous page published the first record of *Delichon urbica*—the House Martin—from western Nepal. The present species is quite easily told in flight by the square tail, and both upper and under tail coverts being black. This results in a narrower white rump band above, and the base of the black underside of the tail looks more “squared-off” below (Fig. 1).

*Motacilla cinerea*—Grey Wagtail

Seen commonly by streams from Lumle to Chhumrung.

*Anthus novaeseelandiae*—Richard’s Pipit

Three in a wet grassy area of the Gokarna Reserve.

*Anthus similis*—Brown Rock Pipit

Several near Pokhara, 6th and 7th August,

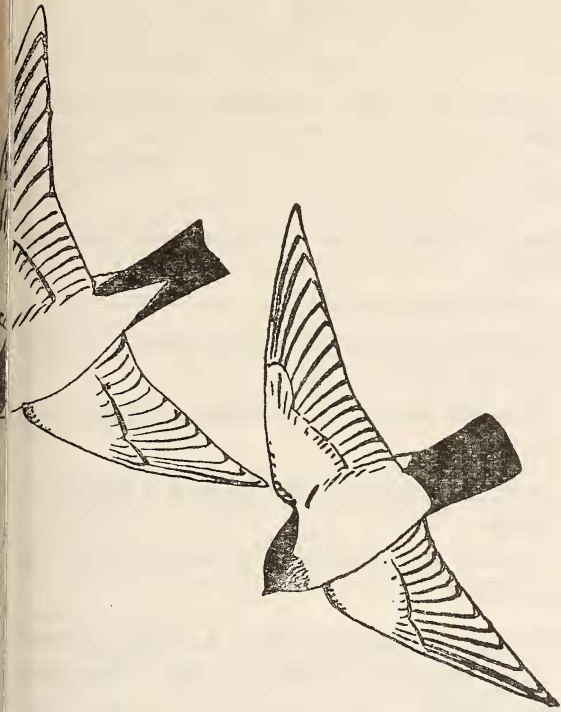


Fig. 1. Diagram to show different pattern of black and tail shape.

Above: Kashmir House-Martin—*Delichon urbica cashmeriensis*; Below: Himalayan House-Martin—*Delichon nipalensis nipalensis*.

one by the airport. This is a fairly large and rather pale brown pipit, lacking the heavy dark streaking above and below of *A. novaeseelandiae* and *A. sylvanus*.

*Anthus sylvanus*—Upland Pipit

Two seen, both in open rocky areas, one above Pokhara at 1350 m the other near Lumle, at 1900 m.

*Pericrocotus ethologus*—Longtailed Minivet

Small party of females and/or young males watched at Khuldi at 1900 m. They showed only a small patch of yellow on the forehead, and whitish cheeks and throat, contrasting with the underparts.

*Pycnonotus leucogenys*—White-cheeked Bulbul

Common. More of a forest bird than *P. cafer*.

*Pycnonotus cafer*—Redvented Bulbul

Common, up to nearly 2000 m.

*Hypsipetes virescens*—Rufous-bellied Bulbul

Seen at 1950 m at Lumle.

*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*—Black Bulbul

Several parties at Lumle and above Pokhara.

*Chloropsis hardwickii*—Orange-bellied Chloropsis

Seen above Biritante at 1200 m.

*Lanius schach*—Blackheaded Shrike

Common up to 2300 m.

*Copsychus saularis*—Magpie Robin

Common in the Nepal valley, but not seen elsewhere.

*Rhyacornis fuliginosus*—Plumbeous Redstart

Common by streams from Biritante to Chhumrung.

*Enicurus maculatus*—Spotted Forktail

Several adults and at least one immature seen by Ghandrung on 28th July and 3-4 August. Although this is obviously a resident species, there do not seem to be many summer records.

*Saxicola torquata*—Stonechat

Several in the Gokarna Reserve, and from Pokhara to Ghandrung.

*Saxicola caprata*—Pied Bush-chat

Gokarna Reserve and Pokhara.

*Saxicola ferrea*—Grey Bush-chat

Seen commonly about Khuldi and Ghandrung, but not below about 2000 m.

*Monticola rufiventris*—Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush

An immature male and a female seen at Khuldi at 2500 m.

*Myiophoneus caeruleus*—Whistling Thrush

Common by rivers and streams from 1300 m at Pokhara to about 3000 m near Khuldi.

*Zoothera mollissima*—Plain-backed Mountain Thrush

Two pairs with fully grown young frequenting forest edge near the new large sheep pen on the hillside at Khuldi, at 2900 m. They tended to be shy, but could with care be watched at close quarters.

*Zoothera dauma*—Small-billed Mountain Thrush

A single bird in the same locality as the previous species. There seem to be very few summer records.

*Turdus bouboul*—Grey-winged Blackbird

Several around Khuldi, at 2800 m.

*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*—Rufous-necked Scimitar Babbler

In small parties near Lumle at 25th July at 2000 m and on 27th July at Chhumrung at 2200 m.

*Pomatorhinus erythrogenys*—Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler

One at Lumle.

*Stachyris ruficeps*—Redheaded Babbler

One bird of this species was seen at 1800 m at Lumle with a party of other small birds including *Phylloscopus* spp. and Grey-headed Flycatchers, Nuthatches and Red-headed Tits. The combination of lemon yellow throat and underparts and the bright brown forehead were distinctive. A good view was obtained as the birds hunted through bamboo and bushes by a stream gully. The species has only been recorded a few times from Nepal, and has hitherto thought to be confined to the Mai valley in the east of the country.

*Garrulax albogularis*—White-throated Laughing Thrush

Common around Lumle up to 2000 m.

*Garrulax moniliger/pectoralis*

A bird which was either the Necklaced or

Blackgorgeted Laughing Thrush was seen with several other birds in bushes above Lumle at about 1750 m on 26 July. Fleming (in litt.) comments that this is high for either of these species, although Proud recorded both at 1675 m in June in the valley (*JBNHS* 48: 699).

*Garrulax leucolophus*—White-crested Laughing Thrush

Common at Lumle.

*Garrulax rufogularis*—Rufous-chinned Laughing Thrush

A small party of four birds at Lumle, 27th July.

*Garrulax ocellatus*—Whitespotted Laughing Thrush

Several at Chhumrung, at about 2750 m on 29th July.

*Garrulax lineatus*—Streaked Laughing Thrush

Very common around Lumle, Ghandrung and Khuldi.

*Garrulax erythrocephalus*—Red-headed Laughing Thrush

Several seen at Khuldi at 2800 m.

*Leiothrix lutea*—Redbilled Leiothrix

Several were found in song in damp gullies around Ghandrung and Khuldi at about 2700 m.

*Pteruthius xanthochloris*—Green Shrike Babbler

One in a mixed flock at Khuldi at 2800 m. It looked like a tubby and large-headed *Phylloscopus* with a short bill, until studied more closely.

*Actinodura nipalensis*—Hoary Barwing

Seen twice near Khuldi, at 2700 m.

*Minla strigula*—Stripe-throated Siva

Common in mixed flocks around Khuldi.

SOME BIRDS OBSERVED IN CENTRAL NEPAL

- Yuhina flavicollis*—Yellow-naped Ixulus  
Common around Lumle at over 1830 m and also Ghandrung and Khuldi.
- Yuhina gularis*—Stripe-throated Yuhina  
Seen near Biritante at 1330 m, and also at Khuldi.
- Yuhina zantholeuca*—White-bellied Erpornis  
Twice seen in the Gokarna reserve, on one occasion singing a short little snatch of rather undistinguished notes. If this was the song—which is as yet unrecorded—it is unimpressive.
- Alcippe vinipectus*—Hodgson's Fulvetta  
Seen quite commonly around Khuldi above 2800 m.
- Heterophasia capistrata*—Black-headed Sibia  
Common in forest from Lumle at 1400 m to Khuldi at about 3000 m.
- Phylloscopus maculipennis*—Grey-faced Willow Warbler  
Several seen around Khuldi and at Hinko cave at 3500 m. One bird was watched at close range feeding a wing-fluttering but fully grown youngster. The habitat was mixed deciduous forest, with rhododendron, and also in soaking wet dwarf bamboo.
- Phylloscopus reguloides*—Blyth's Willow Warbler  
Seen satisfactorily on several occasions at Lumle and Khuldi, and although some other unidentified species were noted, including a larger species with a single wing bar, this seemed to be the commonest.
- Seicercus burkii*—Black-browed Flycatcher-Warbler  
One at Khuldi on 2nd August.
- Seicercus castaniceps*—Chestnut-headed Flycatcher-Warbler  
Several seen in mixed flocks around Khuldi.
- Seicercus xanthoschistos*—Grey-headed Flycatcher-Warbler  
Very common around Lumle, Ghandrung and Khuldi. Also in the Gokarna reserve.
- Prinia criniger*—Brown Hill Warbler  
Several birds singing from maize stalks in terraced fields near Ghandrung.
- Ficedula westermanni*—Little Pied Flycatcher  
Several adults and immature birds around Lumle at the end of July.
- Niltava sundara*—Rufous-bellied Niltava  
An adult with an immature at Khuldi, and an immature in the Gokarna reserve on 8th August.
- Muscicapa rubeculoides*—Blue-throated Flycatcher  
A male in the Gokarna reserve, 8th August.
- Muscicapa moniliger*—White-gorgeted Flycatcher  
An adult of this distinctive, rather round little Flycatcher, and several less distinct juveniles around Lumle, 25th July.
- Muscicapa thalassina*—Verditer Flycatcher  
Quite common at Lumle, Ghandrung, Khuldi and also in the Gokarna reserve.
- Culicicapa ceylonensis*—Grey-headed Flycatcher  
Common from Lumle to Khuldi, and also in the Gokarna reserve.
- Rhipidura hypoxantha*—Yellow-bellied Fantail  
One in a mixed party above Khuldi at 3000 m on 1st August.
- Parus major*—Grey Tit  
One was watched as it fed in a maize field at 1650 m near Lumle on 24th July. Although commonly recorded from the lowlands this seems an unusual locality, but perhaps some records have not got into print.
- Parus monticolus*—Green-backed Tit  
Common in forest, around Lumle, Ghandrung and Khuldi to 3000 m.

*Parus xanthogenys*—Yellow-checked Tit

In similar habitats, and also seen in the Gokarna Reserve.

*Sylviparus modestus*—Yellow-browed Tit

Several in mixed flocks above Khuldi at 3000 m.

*Aegithalos concinnus*—Red-headed Tit

Not uncommon at Lumle and around Ghandrung.

*Sitta castanea*—Cinnamon-bellied Nuthatch

Two birds together in the Gokarna reserve, 22nd July.

*Sitta himalayensis*—White-tailed Nuthatch

Common in hill forests, singly and in mixed parties, around Lumle and up to 2800 m at Khuldi.

*Sitta frontalis*—Velvet-fronted Nuthatch

One in the Gokarna reserve, 8th August.

*Certhia himalayana*—Himalayan Tree Creeper

One seen prospecting an old, gnarled rhododendron near Khuldi on 1st August at 2800 m. The cross-barring on the tail could be seen when looked for, but was not especially conspicuous. I am fairly happy about this identification as I had only recently been painting Himalayan Tree Creepers from Museum skins. If correct, it is a very interesting record as this species is supposed to have a discontinuous distribution in the Himayalas, apparently being absent between west Nepal and northern Burma.

*Dicaeum ignipectus*—Firebreasted Flowerpecker

Near Ghandrung at 2500 m.

*Dicaeum melanozanthum*—Yellowbellied Flowerpecker

Males seen several times near Khuldi at 2900 m usually adorning the very top of a tree, and twitching rather mechanically from side to side.

*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*—Tickell's Flowerpecker

One or two in the Gokarna Reserve, 8th August.

*Dicaeum concolor*—Plain Flowerpecker

Seemed rather commoner in the Gokarna reserve than Tickell's and easily told in a good view by the thin, curved dark bill.

*Aethopyga gouldiae*—Mrs. Gould's Sunbird

A male above Ghandrung at 2200 m, 29th July.

*Aethopyga nipalensis*—Yellow-backed Sunbird

Seen near Ghandrung and Khuldi, at around 2500 m.

*Aethopyga saturata*—Blackbreasted Sunbird

Males seen at Lumle and at Chhumrung, at 2100 m.

*Zosterops palpebrosa*—White-eye

Two in the Gokarna Reserve, 8th August.

*Melophus lathami*—Crested Bunting

A female was seen in the little terraced fields at Biritante at 2100 m on 28th July.

*Carduelis spinoides*—Himalayan Greenfinch

Not uncommon in maize fields in the Ghandrung-Chhumrung area.

*Lonchura malacca*—Chestnut-bellied Munia

Two in wet grassland at Gokarna.

*Passer domesticus*—House Sparrow

The House Sparrow was not seen higher than Lumle, at 1800 m.

*Passer montanus*—Tree Sparrow

Not seen above Chhumrung at 2150 m.

*Sturnus malabaricus*—Grey-headed Myna  
Pokhara.

*Acridotheres tristis*—Common Myna

Seen at up to 3300 m near Chhumrung.

*Acridotheres ginginianus*—Bank Myna

Seen between Kathmandu and the Gokarna reserve. This species does not seem to have been recorded from the valley, but here again perhaps the records have not got into print.

SOME BIRDS OBSERVED IN CENTRAL NEPAL

*Acridotheres fuscus*—Jungle Myna  
 Several around Pokhara, 7th July.

*Oriolus oriolus*—Golden Oriole  
 One in a large tree near Pokhara lake, 7th August.

*Oriolus traillii*—Maroon Oriole  
 One in forest near Biritante, at 1200 m.

*Dicrurus macrocercus*—Black Drongo  
 Kathmandu, Pokhara.

*Dicrurus leucophaeus*—Grey Drongo  
 Common in the Gokarna Reserve, and aro-

und Lumle, to 2300 m near Chhumrung.

*Dicrurus remifer*—Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo  
 A single bird (with only one racket) near Lumle.

*Dendrocitta formosae*—Himalayan Tree-Pie  
 Seen near Lumle, Biritante and Ghandrung.

*Corvus splendens*—House Crow  
 Kathmandu, Pokhara.

*Corvus macrorhynchos*—Jungle Crow  
 Seen commonly above 1300 m near Pokhara to Chhumrung.

REFERENCES

BISWAS, B. (1960-67): The Birds of Nepal. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 57:278-308; 516-546. 58:100-134; 441-474; 653-677. 59:200-227; 405-429; 807-821. 60:173-200; 388-399; 638-654. 63:365-377.

————— (1969): Some New Bird records for Nepal. *ibid.* 65:782-784.

FLEMING, R. L. & TRAYLOR, M. A. (1961): Notes on Nepal Birds. *Fieldiana*. 35(8):443-487.

————— (1964): Further notes on Nepal Birds. *ibid.* 35(9):495-558.

————— (1968): Distributional notes on Nepal Birds. *ibid.* 53(3):147-203.

PROUD, DESIREE (1949): Some Notes on Birds of the Nepal Valley. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 48:695-719.

————— (1951): Some Birds seen on the Gandak-Kosi Watershed in March. *ibid.* 50:355-366.

————— (1951): More Bird Notes from Ne-

pal Valley. *ibid.* 49:784-785.

————— (1952): Further Notes on the Birds of the Nepal Valley. *ibid.* 50:667-670.

————— (1958): Bird Notes from Nepal. *ibid.* 55:345-350.

————— (1955): More Notes on the Birds of the Nepal Valley. *ibid.* 53:57-78.

RAND, A. L. & FLEMING, R. L. (1957): Birds from Nepal. *Fieldiana* 41(1):3-218.

RIPLEY, S. DILLON (1952): Birds from Nepal (1947-49). *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 49:355-417.

SCULLY, J. (1879): A Contribution to the Ornithology of Nepal. *Stray Feathers*. 8:204-368.

SMYTHIES, B. E. (1948): Some Birds of the Gandak-Kosi Watershed. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 47:432-443.

————— (1952): More Notes on Birds of the Nepal Valley. *ibid.* 49:513-518.